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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the relationship between invitational and moral education. Invitational education is defined as a system which intentionally invites students to perceive themselves as valuable, able, and responsible and to behave accordingly. Moral education is a process based on Lawrence Kohlberg's levels of moral reasoning which advocates that schools ought to encourage explicit moral development through a series of increasingly sophisticated cognitive-developmental stages. The hypothesis is that there is an intuitive connection between the two approaches and that this implicit relationship should be made more explicit. The modus operandi of making this relationship explicit was to bring together overlapping ideas of invitational and moral education and to identify those basic principles which are common to both approaches with regard to pedagogy, school programs, and classroom environments. The document is presented in three parts. In part one, the moral basis of invitational education is examined and the levels of moral reasoning involved in taking an inviting stance are explored. In part two, strategies and methods are presented from Kohlberg's cognitive-developmental approach and Peter McPhail's morality of communication perspective. In the final part, suggestions are offered regarding ways in which invitational and moral education can be combined to contribute toward creating more inviting and just classrooms. Suggestions include that teachers understand and practice employing theories of invitational and moral education, foster classroom climates which are conducive to growth of both approaches, and encourage students to make frequent decisions regarding right and wrong. (DB)

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Looking for the Inviting and Just School Environment

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ABSTRACT

LOOKING FOR THE INVITING AND JUST SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

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The basic components of Invitational and Moral Education seem intuitively connected. This three part paper attempts to make this implicit relationship explicit by examining the embedded moral assumptions and implications of the inviting approach, surveying two basic Moral Education programs in terms of their essential and inviting characteristics, and by bringing overlapping ideas of the two approaches together to describe basic principles for pedagogy, school programs and environments.

In Part I the moral basis of invitational education is examined by looking at the responsibilities of the sender of invitations, noting the perceived unfairness of disinviting messages, pointing to larger institutional, moral dimensions and sketching levels of moral reasoning involved in choosing to take an inviting stance.

The second part of the paper presents strategies and methods from Kohlberg's cognitive-developmental approach and McPhail's morality of communication perspective. Suggestions are made to invite students to participate in just environments through reasoning about perceived real problems. The section ends with a sketch of the moral person.

In the final section the mutual mandate invitational and moral education share in the development of the fully functioning, autonomous person is stressed. This goal is reached through educators who know the theory well and can model it consistently in the classroom. Ultimately, however, the larger school environment needs to be in harmony with the ideals stressed in the inviting and just classroom.

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The idea of "inviting" school success has a sort of prima facie appeal to some educators interested in treating students fairly, humanely and effectively. According to its basic tenets, optimal intellectual, emotional and physical development is most apt to take place in environments which intentionally invite students to perceive themselves as valuable, able and responsible and to behave accordingly (Purkey, 1978). If it can be assumed that higher intellectual functioning is a necessary concomitant for higher level moral reasoning development (Piaget, 1965; Kohlberg, 1970), then it would seem logical to infer that the inviting approach could be an important aid in moral education programs. Unfortunately nothing has been written about the possible relationship between invitational and moral education. Thus it is the intention of this paper to explore various ways in which basic ideas in invitational and moral education may be connected.

In order to accomplish this task this paper is divided into three parts. First the embedded moral assumptions and implications of the inviting approach will be examined. Next two specific and leading moral education programs will be surveyed in terms of their basic and inviting qualities. Finally the two ideas will be brought together to describe principles for pedagogy, school programs and environments which are essential to both invitational and moral education.

PART I

Without a developed moral component the systematic sending of attractive, affirmative messages could easily become, at best, fixated at Kohlberg's Level 3 or, at worst, a mindless system of superficial affectations. Fortunately the interpersonal inviting process has embedded in it some important moral dimensions which can also be possibly extended to a larger institutional perspective. This section will look at the moral basis of invitational education by examining the responsibilities of the sender of invitations, noting the perceived unfairness of disinviting messages, and by suggesting a larger institutional moral dimension hinted at in the psychology of invitations. The section will end with a brief sketch of levels of possible moral reasoning involved in choosing to take an inviting stance.

To send an inviting message in good faith involves certain ethical assumptions (Novak, 1980). First of all the inviter ought to be sincere in extending the message and believe that desirable consequences are likely to occur to at least the receiver of the message. The authenticity of the sender and the desirability of positive consequences go together with the notion that the inviting process is a doing something "with" another human being as opposed to doing something "to" a less than human object. Following this "doing with" logic is the basic idea that the inviter has the power and responsibility to extend invitations but recognizes and respects the recipients' right to accept, reject or hold in abeyance the message.

In addition the extender has the responsibility of following up on any obligations incurred as a part of extending the invitation. Thus the interpersonal inviting process has a built-in moral code which involves reflection and authenticity, an emphasis on respecting a respondent's autonomy, and a responsibility to complete the action offered in the invitation.

In addition to the moral rules involved in sending invitations, receivers of certain messages report that being treated unfairly can be a definite disinvitation.

The following are examples offered in Inviting School Success (Purkey, 1978) which seem to point out the disinviting nature of perceived unjust treatment:

> "The teacher put me out in the hall for everyone to laugh at."
>
> "The teacher said to me in front of the whole class: 'I really don't think you're that stupid.'"
>
> "I transferred to a new school after it had started. When I appeared at the teacher's doorway, she said 'Oh no, not another one!'"
>
> (pp. 14-15)

Implied in these messages is not only the intended negativity but also the fact that the sender is perceived to have exceeded his or her bounds and has done something which is unfair and counter-productive to the essence of the role. Thus the sending and receiving of interpersonal messages does not exist in a vacuum but is perceived to exist within a social system of rules and roles, which when violated, can be interpreted as negating a person's worth, ability or responsibility.

Finally, in looking at the way invitations are distributed in schools and society, Purkey notes that those who need invitations the most receive them the least. What seems to be implied in this statement is that schools ought to make a special effort to invite those who need invitations the most. Taking this moral claim seriously seems to open up substantive questions of distributive justice such as "Who should get a disproportionate number of invitations?", "How is this to be determined?", "Who has the responsibility of extending these messages?", "Are there school policies which, by their very nature, are disinviting to certain groups or individuals?". Obviously answering questions such as these requires an explicit moral commitment to a certain type of social system and a specific theory of justice. This has yet to be done in Invitational Education. If, however, being treated unjustly is perceived to be disinviting, then it could be argued that an idea of justice such as that offered by John Rawls in A Theory of Justice (1971) might provide a system of basic principles and concepts which could guide educators in developing policies and strategies for intentionally and systematically extending invitations.

Let us assume that an individual chooses to be inviting. An analysis of the structure of moral reasoning involved in making this choice may provide some insight into the type of developed position that may be necessary to sustain an inviting perspective. Using Kohlberg's three levels of moral reasoning as a guide, let us look briefly at hypothetical reasons which may be given for being inviting.

Preconventional Level: The sending of affirmative and attractive messages is directly related to the self-centered consequences of the effects of these messages. Moral reasoning at this level would concentrate on the punishment avoided or the reward gained by being inviting.

e.g. "I'm inviting in my classroom because the kids cause me less trouble."

"Because of the positive messages I send the students are more enjoyable to be around."

Conventional Level: The extending of invitations is related to the inner motive to do that which is considered "good" by either a small group or the larger society.

e.g. "Our school sees itself as the most inviting place in town and I want to be a part of it."

"A teacher is expected to be inviting and I am going to live up to that expectation."

Postconventional Level: The decision to act in an inviting manner is based on defensible, principled reasons which are seen to have validity apart from an individual's group identification. That which is considered right "is defined by general or universal human rights, values or principles which both the society and the individual are obligated to uphold" (Arbuthnot and Faust, 1981, p. 50).

e.g. "Because schools ought to be based on what is essential for realization of human potential I consciously work to counteract disinviting messages and attempt to systematically send invitations."

"I am inviting because students have a basic right to be treated as persons who are valuable, able and responsible."

It would seem essential for invitational education to look seriously at a postconventional rationale for justifying the inviting process. With such a defensible justification it can potentially counteract the stage four "law and order" orientation used to defend much of the current "factory model" rationale for policies in our present school system.

PART II

Within the recent educational literature there has been much attention given to values and moral education. Contemporary interest within the domain is high and some controversy still exists. Most now accept that moral education is inevitable implicitly by virtue of everything a teacher does consciously and unconsciously when messages are sent about right and wrong. But when one enters the more explicit realm, controversy is still quite high.

Lawrence Kohlberg's advocation that schools ought to encourage explicit moral development through a series of empirically known stages has produced much controversial debate (Arbuthnot, Faust, 1981, p. viii). Kohlberg's cognitive-developmental perspective with development as the aim of education aims to develop thought and reasoning processes "to maximal effectiveness and sophistication" (Arbuthnot, Faust, 1981, p. vii). This is a moral responsibility of the highest order.

Peter McPhail is concerned with moral education as a process as well and emphasizes that the nature of verbal and non-verbal communication makes it unavoidable that we are all intentionally or unintentionally moral educators of some kind (McPhail, 1980, p. 135).

Both Kohlberg and McPhail stress the necessity for creating a climate so that the individual might develop. Kohlberg speaks of just environments where just messages can be sent and received. McPhail speaks of a "morality of communication" where climates are created to receive, interpret and respond to messages.

The Social Studies literature speaks to establishing 'democratic' environments where democratic principles can be taught through practice. In 1979 the NCSS (The Social Studies Professional, 1981) reaffirmed the essentials of exemplary social studies programs which have concern not only for basic cognitive disciplines but also link knowledge and skill with an understanding of and a commitment to democratic principles and their application.

Social Studies educators are concerned that good programs do not indoctrinate students to blindly accept ideas and ideals. Environments have to be established where democratic principles rooted in the concepts of justice, equality and freedom can be practiced and allowed to develop.

There is no doubt that moral behaviour is learned and that it can be developed positively or negatively with children. Environments as well as being inviting must be fair and how adults within these environments treat children is critical to their development. Creative, humane teachers can structure a social environment that is basically regular, supportive and essentially a safe place to be. The child has to have the security of knowing and experiencing trust if he is to develop. Environments offering encouragement through interest, caring and fairness provide a necessary base for learning principles conducive to becoming rational agents in a real world (Schulte and Teal, 1975, p. 225).

To adapt theories to classroom practice is a problem of some magnitude. Not only must a curriculum practitioner be thoroughly

familiar with the theory but he must be prepared to plan its use in schools. It is not an easy task to develop the necessary sequential adaptation of the theory over time and place so that a final outcome might be reasoning at a high level of maturity and sophistication in life situations. Much dissonance can take place in school environments where messages are alien to inviting, just messages. As well, if development is not planned from grade to grade over time, such development will be retarded.

The skills of practicing moral reasoning in a classroom are in need of development as well. Not only must one be thoroughly familiar with the stages from initial simplistic egocentric orientations to more complex social-oriented bases and gradually to principled levels, but one must plan the sequence of methodology over time and place. And the milieu in which development takes place is all important as well.

Kohlberg, through his research, has shown that development is maximized when moral conflict 'one stage up' is patterned (Kohlberg, 1972). Puzzlement, curiosity, challenge and interest will do much more for this development than turmoil, anxiety and distrust. Disequilibrium must be accomplished within an environment that provides for this kind of motivation where individuals are not damaged or weakened emotionally so that they will not develop. It is the kind of environment built to promote dissonance which is all important.

One could not recommend that an environment be built which is conflict-free. One has to examine seriously reasons held for beliefs

and perhaps be 'upset' by someone else's orientation. Yet the child, in order to grow rationally, has to experience a safe, caring environment where experiences are planned to stimulate and motivate higher stage thinking.

The autonomy of the individual concerning his participation in any moral education discussion experience must be respected as well. A trust has to be built so that an individual might express his belief system or his disagreement with someone else without fear of reprisal (Arbuthnot, Faust, 1981, pp. 142, 143). Disagreement or discussion is not discouraged but it is unacceptable to treat the individual with any less respect because of a particular orientation taken or a particular value held.

It is important also to point out that in group discussion situations all individuals should be accorded equal consideration regardless of their belief systems but of their stage levels as well. To make the Kohlberg social interaction methodology function, access to alternative viewpoints is important but it must be done in an environment which respects all individuals and treats them with equal dignity.

In Kohlberg's prison studies it is shown that where offenders had the experience of a genuinely just, participating community, the individual could then think in terms of higher moral thought (Kohlberg, 1972). Where structures are perceived as fair and just, then understandings of the moral basis for law and society can be developed. His aim was to establish an institution which has a

consistent moral atmosphere as perceived by its participants where higher moral thought can develop.

The moral environment of the classroom and of the school may affect individual development by either directly supporting or discouraging behaviour based on moral thought. If a classroom environment and a school environment is a consistent moral atmosphere where higher moral development can be practised, then growth can take place. If an environment supports principled action and thought through changing, then growth is enhanced. If a classroom or school belittles a student whose moral thought has been advanced, development is not being helped (Arbuthnot and Faust, p. 143).

One does not wish to suggest that moral development is served by turning the classroom or the school over to students and deciding matters by majority vote (Schulte and Teal, 1975, pp. 224-235). If rules are questioned in group discussion there simply must be encouragement in the total environments of classrooms and schools for serious examination of these rules. Rules or practices when they are rationally judged to be unjustifiable or unfair must be able to be changed. Moral development will not be served by alienation or anti-educational attitudes built when rational approaches to rules and social changes are not really considered and perhaps applied. An emphasis in a school on higher level rational attitudes and approaches towards policies and practices will be very influential in the moral development of all concerned (Schulte and Teal, 1975, pp. 224-235).

McPhail regards moral education as the process whereby individuals can learn to live better with each other. From his surveys some 70% of 450 adolescent boys and girls whom he interviewed, felt that school education (classrooms as individual units and schools as a whole) should help young people to learn to live and work with others and it could do this when individuals and schools practice what they preach about others and the environment.

McPhail believes that moral education should be founded upon present experiences and active day to day concerns of the young, parents and teachers in order to establish general motivation for moral action. His morality of communication is concerned with bridging the gap between moral thought and moral action (McPhail, 1980, pp. 144-151).

In McPhail's research with pre-adolescents, he stresses that a basic motivation for considerate behaviour depended upon the affiliation an individual had with significant adults (parents, relatives, adult friends and the teacher). These children were most happy, secure and effective when there was a consistent structure of rules for behaviour administered by 'significant others' in affection. This was the base from which their practical concern for others grew.

As individuals grow, according to McPhail, they move from a secure base to increasing independence in choice and behaviour. But an adult failure to supply ground rules, predictability and fundamental security early on can create difficulties at this

development stage. The ideal balance between structure and freedom for a specific child is a matter of judgment for the concerned individuals. But the judgment depends upon the communication of the child and the interpretation ability of the adult.

Our aim as educators, according to McPhail, should always be

> To sustain the interest, active involvement and sense of achievement which depend on relevance, challenge and the richness of actual experience. When we move from what individuals actually do in situations through experiencing, doing and discussing to the point when what I "ought" to do ceases to be an abstraction and becomes a way of life.
> (McPhail, 1980, p. 150)

Both Kohlberg and McPhail express curriculum implications for classroom and school practice in moral education. The development of the morally autonomous person is an ancient and honoured goal of education. Schools with a serious concern for the human community cannot neglect this goal. How to create a coherent progressive program for moral education of children and adolescents will be the central curriculum challenge of the years ahead but invitational education, which emphasizes both just and inviting environments, offers much hope.

The vision of the moral person can be described (Schulte and Teal, 1975, p. 235). He is fully autonomous even though open to the influence of family, peers, teachers and society. But he makes his own personal decisions about right and wrong and accepts the responsibility for this. He recognizes the results of his actions on others and in choosing to act gives full consideration to others. He acts on principle. Right or wrong is not a matter of taste or opinion,

custom or legality. It is a matter of moral principle. If a personal desire is not compatible with a personal principle, it is the desire abandoned. Nothing takes priority over doing what he or she judges to be right.

Educators have a unique opportunity to help in the development of such a moral person. Just and inviting education can be a critical agent for such development.

PART III

Invitational Education seeks the intentional transmission and reception of attractive and affirmative messages which best enhance positive self-concept development of the person. Moral Education is concerned with the maximal development of the person in terms of his or her decision-making capacity in situations involving the choice of right and wrong. Both share a mutual mandate in the development of the fully functioning autonomous person.

It is most necessary that teachers understand well the theories of invitational and moral education and receive some practice in employing them. Teachers need to model essential principles in their everyday interaction with students and in order to do this must proceed on a basis of deep understanding of the theories.

If moral and invitational education are to be effective, climates have to be built which are conducive to their growth.

Environments that are essentially fair and just will help with the development of explicit programs for sending and receiving fair and just messages. But it will be necessary to attend to consistency of environments over space and time. One cannot underestimate the importance of having the larger school environment be in harmony with the atmosphere created in the classroom. Also, environments need to be consistent over time - from grade to grade - so that development can be maximized.

Living in a democratic society, we are conscious of the need to employ democratic principles in accomplishing our educational ends. Schools in bringing children into everyday experiences in an effort to improve the way they answer questions and problems will narrow the gap between thought and action. Situations can become most inviting and potential does exist to help in everyday decision-making on matters involving right and wrong. In this way, moral behaviour can be changed through moral thought.

If we are to develop fully functioning democratic persons, both moral and invitational education working together can help with this. Both theories stress the need of the individual person to be open to the influence of significant others and to hold mutual respect for each other. Decisions made, of course, must recognize the results of actions on others and the rights of others must always be taken into consideration. Action is not a matter of taste or opinion, custom or legality, but a matter of moral principle developed and held rationally. Both theories working together can develop such an autonomous person.

If moral and invitational education are to come together, some attention will have to be given to curriculum matters. Methods and techniques ought to be developed which challenge but do not unnecessarily threaten students and basic human rights are to be respected in all transactions. Curriculum planning needs to be aimed at the active involvement of educators, students and parents. Specific curriculum programs will have to be developed.

To bring moral and invitational education together to accomplish the maximal development of the person is a most welcome challenge for the future.

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